

Finding of No Significant Impact

FINDING

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) and the National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak) propose to make railroad infrastructure improvements between Milwaukee and Madison, WI to allow for the restoration of passenger rail service. The purpose of the project is to provide passenger rail service that is direct, convenient, attractive, and competitive with the travel time and costs of auto, intercity bus and regional air services between these two points.

This finding of no significant impact (FONSI) has been prepared to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and related laws in anticipation that Federal funding may become available. Limited federal funding currently exists to supplement project elements. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has concluded that should Federal funds be provided to implement the Milwaukee-Madison Passenger Rail Service Project, it would constitute a major Federal action within the meaning of section 102 (c) of NEPA (42 U.S.C. 4321). When funded for implementation, appropriate reevaluation shall be completed.

The Milwaukee-Madison Passenger Rail Service Project allows for the possibility of future expanded service that is envisioned to continue past Madison to St. Paul, MN; however no decision has been made on the routing of any improved service between Chicago and St. Paul. Should this component of the proposed Midwest Regional Rail System be advanced with Federal sponsorship, a separate environmental document would consider potential routes including: this route through Madison and the direct Milwaukee to St. Paul CP mainline.

While additional track and ancillary infrastructure necessary to support the proposed service between Milwaukee and Madison has been thoroughly assessed in this document, agreement on the extent and configuration of these infrastructure improvements has not been reached with the CP Railroad. Should funds become available to advance this project, all owners and operators of the various segments of railroad to be improved shall approve scaled drawings of the proposed track and interlocking configurations; providing that the FRA may waive this requirement in instances where the consent of any party is unreasonably withheld. Reevaluation of potential environmental impacts would also be prepared for any major modifications of the proposed improvements such as the addition of passing tracks not already considered in this document.

While the development of stations has been deferred to the municipalities that would be served by them, the provision of adequate accessible platforms is part of the Milwaukee-Madison Passenger Rail Service Project and has been considered in this document. Should Federal funding be used to develop other station facilities such as buildings,

parking, or roadways supplemental environmental documentation shall be prepared for those improvements.

An Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared for the Milwaukee-Madison Passenger Rail Service Project and was circulated to the public. Three public hearings were held and the FONSI provides responses to those comments. This document summarizes the potential impacts of the project and includes environmental commitments that mitigate any potential for impact. Therefore, according to FRA's "Procedures for Considering Environmental Impacts," the FRA finds that the project as presented by WisDOT, assessed in the EA, and presented in this document will not have a significant impact on the quality of the human or natural environment.